Book Review: Personality as a factor affecting the use of language learning strategies: The case of university students, Jakub Przybył and Mirosław Pawlak (2023), 210 pp., €129.99, Hardback, ISBN 978-3-031-25254-9, Springer Cham.

Reviewed by:

Rizgar Qasim Mahmood
The University of Wollongong, Australia

Correspondence
Email: rizgar@uow.edu.au

Language learning is a complex process influenced by individual personality traits (Ellis, 2008). Recognizing these traits can lead to more effective and personalized educational approaches (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003), focusing on enhancing motivation, perseverance, and learning preferences. Educators can create successful language learning experiences by considering learners' strengths and weaknesses and offering appropriate support. Language learning strategies hold significant importance among learner characteristics, as they are consistently associated with higher L2 achievement and self-regulated language learning. However, language learning strategies do not act in isolation; they interact with other learner-related variables, including personality. While some research exists on the connection between personality traits and strategic learning, it remains limited and fragmented, often relying on outdated research instruments. As teachers strive to better understand how personality influences language learning strategies, further exploration is needed to unlock valuable insights and optimize language learning experiences. To fill this gap, Jakub Przybył and Mirosław Pawlak (2023) published a book entitled "*Personality as a Factor Affecting the Use of Language Learning Strategies: The Case of University Students*" as an attempt to link the reported use of language learning strategies by tertiary L2 learners

in Poland to their personality traits. However, the main goal is not merely to understand the psychological profile of successful language learners (Dewaele, 2021). Instead, it aims to identify clusters of second language learners with similar levels of personality traits and reported language learning strategies use. To serve this purpose, the authors have divided the book into six chapters in which each chapter deals with specific aspects of personalities and language learning strategies starting from theoretical background to pedagogical implications in the concluding chapter.

Chapter One takes readers on a journey to be equipped with various approaches to investigating personality because there is direct interaction between personality and human actions. In terms of language and personality, they are intrinsically linked. How language is employed is dictated by the individual's personality, irrespective of whether it is their native tongue, a second language, or a foreign language. Furthermore, this chapter familiarizes readers with various perspectives of personality studies such as the *idiographic or nomothetic perspectives*. The first approach emphasizes individual uniqueness in in-depth case studies, while the other explores universal personality characteristics in a larger group, describing tendencies rather than unique traits. One crucial purpose of this chapter is to present and explain different approaches to personality investigation such as the psychodynamic approach, the behaviourist approach, the phenomenological approach (sometimes also referred to as humanistic), the social learning approach and the trait approach. Understanding these approaches is essential in teaching a language. For instance, knowing if learners are introverts or extroverts changes teachers' teaching plans and strategies throughout the course because it helps teachers realise individual differences among the learners. Therefore, this chapter comprehensively presents these approaches and the factors that model personality with adequate support from previous studies.

In Chapter Two, the authors have taken a specific approach to looking into "language learning strategies". They start with the existing debate on the best definition of language learning strategies. Several early and recent definitions have been presented in this chapter. For example, LLS can be seen as "the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge" (p.47). Furthermore, this chapter aims to tackle the difficulties associated with considering how learners utilize language learning strategies (LLS). In this sense, the authors suggested that understanding learners' inherent characteristics could lead to better development and successful learners' strategies might be adapted for less proficient ones. Within various existing definitions, efficient LLS use necessitates awareness of personal factors for L2 learning and recognition of one's language competence. Therefore, LLS utilization is heavily influenced by learners' beliefs, and raising awareness of LLS can assist them in diagnosing language problems, reflecting on their progress, and managing their emotions. Moreover, in this chapter, the authors provide readers with a detailed explanation of seven classifications of LLS by various experts from 1981 to 2018. Another important point in this chapter is Self-regulation Learning (SRL) which is "an

active, constructive process in which learners plan, monitor, and control their learning process" (p.68). Following this, teachers can implement it to organize learning and gain resources, then, monitor and evaluate learning. The authors include this chapter by explaining a list of variables, personality as one of them, that mediate LLS, and how each variable can affect language learning.

After discussing language learning strategies and personalities in the previous chapter, the third chapter is dedicated to delving into research on the role of personality in second language (L2) learning. This chapter categorizes the studies exploring the influence of personality on second language (L2) learning into various areas, including L2 use and performance, L2 attainment, specific L2 skills, L2 anxiety, L2 willingness to communicate (WTC), L2-related attitudes and emotions, and the use of language learning strategies (LLS). Furthermore, the findings of several previous studies have been reported. For example, in a study among Japanese learners, it was found that there were no significant correlations between learners' personality traits and measures of fluency, accuracy, or complexity in their language performance. However, the analysis did identify a significant, positive, and moderate correlation between learners' extraversion and the global impression of their oral performance. Therefore, this chapter enlightens readers to understand what factors affect L2 learning based on empirical findings from previous studies. For example, it has been reported that personality is not a reliable predictor of language learning attainment. Yet other studies have found that personality can play an essential role in classroom engagement, and even L2 writing development relies significantly on both learners' characteristics and their capacity for self-regulation. Hence, this chapter informs readers, especially teachers that personality has a big role in L2 learning and development, thus, understanding it is vital to a more effective learning process.

In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, the authors have taken a different approach to tackle the topic as they start with the methodology of the research project, then, in the following chapter, the findings of the research project have been presented, and in the concluding chapter, the focus is on pedagogical implications, and directions for future research. Chapter four starts with a pilot study to explore the connections between language learners' personality traits and their selection of language learning strategies (LLS), and it contains the participants, data collection, and research instruments. After the pilot study, the main study is presented with the key elements of the study including the methodology, the participants (i.e., undergraduate EFL learners at Polish universities), the research questions/instruments, and various methods of data analysis. Then, chapter five presents the findings of the described project in chapter four. In this chapter, the authors have attempted to answer the research questions. The study discovered that successful language learners can effectively leverage their personality traits by utilizing their individual strengths and compensating for potential weaknesses, adapting to the specific learning environment. Therefore, one of the key elements of L2 learning can be personality, and when learners understand their personality, it leads them to be more successful learners.

The closing chapter puts forth the implications and some directions for future research. Overall, the book falls under the category of research work aiming to explore and understand the connections between individual characteristics of second language (L2) learners. After the data analysis, the authors found that the use of language learning strategies (LLS) can be partially attributed to L2 learners' personality traits. In addition to that, it also revealed several intriguing patterns in strategy utilization. One clear implication for university L2 teachers is to make use of various compensation and communication strategies in their classes. Furthermore, the authors suggested that as learners exhibit significant variations in their personality traits, it becomes apparent that teachers' attitudes and beliefs are crucial but equally important in the selection of diverse learning tasks to cater to the individual needs of different students. The authors close the chapter by providing some suggestions for future research and presenting some limitations of the current volume.

Finally, one notable strength of the book is its comprehensive approach to exploring the link between personality and language learning strategies. The authors provide a thorough overview of the existing research, highlighting the importance of recognizing individual traits such as motivation, perseverance, and learning preferences. By emphasizing the role of language learning strategies (LLS) and their association with higher L2 achievement and self-regulated learning, the book emphasizes practical implications for language educators seeking to enhance their teaching methodologies. This way of approaching the topic is unique to this book if compared with other available books, and that is why it fills a crucial gap in the literature and offers a unique perspective on language learning and its connection to individual characteristics.

In summary, as a reader, a teacher, and an educator, I strongly believe that this book not only provides us with a significant understanding of learners' personalities in language education but also underscores the potential for optimizing language learning experiences through personalized approaches. By recognizing the nuanced interplay between personality and language learning strategies, educators can better equip their students to achieve success in their language journeys. "Personality as a Factor Affecting the Use of Language Learning Strategies" serves as an essential resource for both language teachers and researchers, paving the way for further exploration into this captivating and vital aspect of language learning. In conclusion, this book is a valuable addition to the field of language education, and its findings have the potential to shape more effective and inclusive language teaching practices in the future. Whether you are an educator, a language learner, or a researcher, it offers valuable insights that will undoubtedly enrich your understanding of the intricate relationship between personality traits and successful language learning.

ORCID

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5987-8884

Rights and Permissions

www.EUROKD.com

References

Dewaele, J.-M. (2021). Personality. In T. Gregersen & S. Mercer (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of the psychology of language learning and teaching* (pp.112-123*).* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429321498

Dörnyei, Z., & Skehan, Z. (2003). Individual differences in second language learning. In C. J. Doughty, & M. H. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 589-630). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470756492.ch18

Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition.* Oxford University Press.